Safety First

Home canning is NOT recommended for pumpkin butter or any mashed or pureed pumpkin or winter squash.

There is not sufficient data available to establish safe processing times for any of these products. Some of the factors that are critical to the safety of canned pumpkin products are the viscosity (thickness), the acidity and the water activity. Pumpkin and winter squash are also low-acid food (pH > 4.6) capable of supporting the growth of *Clostridium botulinum* bacteria which can cause the very serious illness, *botulism*, under the right storage conditions. If the bacteria are present and survive processing, and the product has a high enough water activity, they can thrive and produce toxin in the product.

Preparing Fresh Pumpkin to be Used in Recipes

1. **Baked Fresh Pumpkin:** Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Cut the pumpkin in half and clean out the seeds and strings. Cover a baking sheet with tin foil. Brush melted butter on the cut edges of the pumpkin and place the sides cut side down on the cookie sheet. Cook approximately one hour or until pumpkin is soft. Cool. Remove the pumpkin skin and cut into pieces and blend or put through a food processor until the mixture is smooth like canned pumpkin.
2. **Boiled Fresh Pumpkin:** Remove the seeds and strings. Peel and cut the pumpkin into chunks and place them in a large pan. Bring to a light boil. Cook until tender. Cool. As with the baked method, blend or food process the pumpkin until smooth.
3. **Microwaved Fresh Pumpkin:** Remove the seeds and strings. Cube with the rind on and place cubes in a microwave safe bowl and cover loosely with paper towels or plastic wrap. Cook on medium until soft. Check every 5 minutes as microwave times vary. Once cubes are cooled, peel off the rind. Blend or food process until smooth just as in the other methods.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation

Resource:

www.buylocalnebraska.org

University of Nebraska Lincoln EXTENSION

PUMPKINS & SQUASH

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Freezing Summer Squash and Pumpkins

(Varieties include: Cocozelle, Crookneck, Pattypan, Straightneck, White Scallop, Zucchini)

Freezing Squash:

Preparation: Choose young squash with tender skin. Wash and cut in ½-inch slices. Water blanch 3 minutes. Cool promptly, drain and package in rigid container, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Grated Zucchini (for Baking): Choose young tender zucchini. Wash and grate. Steam blanch in small quantities 1 to 2 minutes until translucent. Pack in measured amounts into containers, leaving ½-inch headspace. Cool by placing the containers in cold water. Seal and freeze.

Freezing Winter Squash:

(Acorn, Banana, Buttercup, Golden Delicious, Hubbard, Spaghetti)

Preparation: Select firm, mature squash with a hard rind. For spaghetti squash, mashing the cooked pulp is not necessary.

Cook until soft in boiling water, in steam, in a pressure canner or in an oven. Remove pulp from rind and mash. To cool, place pan containing squash in cold water and stir occasionally. Package in rigid containers, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Freezing Pumpkin:

Preparation: Select full-colored mature pumpkin with fine texture. Wash, cut into cooking-size sections and remove seeds.

Cook until soft in boiling water, in steam, in a pressure cooker or in an oven. Remove pulp from rind and mash. To cool, place pan containing pumpkin in cold water and stir occassionally. Package in rigid containers, leaving ½-inch headspace. Seal and freeze.

Pumpkins and Winter Squash - Cubed

Quantity: An average of 16 pounds is needed per canner load of 7 quarts; an average of 10 pounds is needed per canner load of 9 pints - an average of 2¼ pounds per quart.

Quality: Pumpkins and squash should have a hard rind and stringless, mature pulp of ideal quality for cooking fresh. Small size pumpkins (sugar or pie varieties) make better products.

Procedure: Wash, remove seeds, cut into 1-inch-wide slices and peel. Cut flesh into 1-inch cubes. Boil 2 minutes in water. **Caution: Do not mash or puree.** Fill jars with cubes and cooking liquid, leaving 1-inch headspace.

Adjust lids and process following the recommendations in Table 1 and Table 2.

Table 1. Recommended process time for **Pumpkin and Winter Squash** in a dial-gauge pressure canner.

			Canner Pressure (PSI) at Altitudes of			
Style of Pack	**Jar Size**	**Process Time**	**0-2,000 ft**	**2,001-4,000 ft**	**4,001 ft-6,000 ft**	**6,001-8,000 ft**
Hot	Pints	55 min	**11 lb**	12	13 lb	14 lb
	Quarts	20	**11**	12	13	14

Table 2. Recommended process time for **Pumpkin and Winter Squash** in a weighted-gauge pressure canner.

		Process Time at Altitudes of		
Style of Pack	**Jar Size**	**Process Time**	0 - 1,000 ft	**Above 1,000 ft**
Hot	Pints	**15 min**	10 lb	15 lb
	Quarts	**90**	10	15

Summer Squash: Canning summer squash or zucchini is not recommended because of the uncertainty about the processing times. Squashes are low-acid vegetables and require pressure canning for a known period of time that will destroy the bacteria that causes botulism. Slices or cubes of cooked summer squash will get quite soft and pack tightly into the jars. The amount of squash filled into a jar will affect the heating pattern in that jar. It is best to freeze or pickle summer squashes.

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